

BMN HIKE REPORT

Woodland Walk (June 8, 2019)

By Mark Johnston



BMN members celebrating the creation of Pinecone Burke Provincial Park in 1995. *BMN Archives.*

For a number of years now we have organized an annual hike to introduce people to our backyard wilderness, Pinecone Burke Provincial Park. We schedule these hikes on or near the anniversary date of the creation of the park. This year's hike was on the very day, June 8, and commemorated twenty-four years since the park was proclaimed in 1995.

This year we had twenty-five participants. As is our custom, we divided into groups. A group of ten started earlier and moved at a faster pace. A second group of initially fourteen began a bit later and hiked at a more measured pace. The leader of a potential third group waited at the trailhead for several more minutes, just in case there might a few who were late to show up. After waiting for what he judged to be an adequate amount of time, he was able to catch up with, and join, the second group, bringing its number to fifteen. For the most part the two groups were on their own, but we did meet briefly near Saw Blade Falls. By then, the first group had already spent time at the falls

and was beginning the trip back; the second group, of which I was a part, was just arriving at the falls.

The weather, as is so often the case on these anniversary hikes, was cloudy. The forecast called for a chance of showers, but the rain never materialized. We even enjoyed a few moments of sunlight, with rays shafting down through the canopy to spotlight the shrubs and ferns growing on the forest floor.

When we were gathering at the trailhead, there was a female sooty (blue) grouse walking about in the middle of the approach road.

The female sooty grouse.
Terry Puls photo.

Some of us had trouble steering our vehicles around it. At times the grouse would fluff up her feathers and sit down on the gravel—perhaps trying to distract, such as a killdeer might do?



As those of us in the second group started up Garbage mountain bike trail (also referred to as Lower Elevator), it was still early enough in the morning that the Port Coquitlam & District Hunting & Fishing Club's marksmen had not yet begun their shooting. In the quiet of the forest, we enjoyed hearing the Pacific wren's bubbling trill. We also heard the Pacific-slope flycatcher's "up-slurred *tseep*" and Swainson's thrush's familiar call note, *whit . . . whit*.

In this dry year I suspected that the volume of water in the various creeks, and, hence, in their falls and cascades, would be very low. And as we walked from stream to stream, my suspicion was borne out. But while it is always exciting to view the creeks when they are running high, we found observing the cascades at low water to have its own rewards. At the end of the Woodland Walk Trail, some of us descended the steep embankment to enjoy a closer view of Coho Creek's falls and cascades. Here, even though the volume of water tumbling over the cascades was low, the creek's channelling through the narrow, rocky gorge still made for an exquisite display. Later, at Saw Blade Falls all of us used the recently improved trail to access the base of the falls. Here, too, though the amount of

water pouring over the falls was diminished, its braiding on the dark cliff face had a beautiful gossamer effect.

At Saw Blade Falls we enjoyed a leisurely lunch. It was cool but not so cold that we couldn't linger for a while. While we were eating, two or three other parties arrived at the falls. One threesome—three middle-aged men—celebrated the moment with red wine poured into tumblers.

After lunch we descended to the Woodland Walk's Lower Loop and followed it back out to the power line. As we emerged from the woods, we could look across the Coquitlam River valley and see the gravel pits on lower Eagle Ridge. While looking across the valley toward the scarred mountainside, we heard two or three birds we had not heard previously, including willow flycatcher and orange-crowned warbler. The former bird sings a distinctive *fitz-bew* and the latter a "colourless trill."

When we'd had our fill of the view, we dropped down the cut-bank onto the road beneath the power line. In the openness of the right-of-way, we were actually able to spot a couple of birds. Not the ones we had heard, but two new species. First, some of us saw a red-breasted sapsucker fly into the trees and back out again. Moments later, having been alerted to the presence of tanagers by an outbound hiker, we were fortunate enough to see one of the colourful birds perched on a bare stem rising from an old stump. Although we were gazing at the bird's back, we could see its red head. We watched it for some time before it finally flew off and, when in flight, revealed its bright yellow breast.

A little ways down the road, we passed by the Upper/Lower loop junction and then we were back on our morning route. Our only variation was to stay with the road (Coquitlam Lake View Trail) rather than return via the Garbage mountain bike trail. Back at the trailhead, people expressed their satisfaction with the hike and were very complimentary toward its leaders. Hopefully, we will see some of these hikers out on future club outings!